

Remarks

The Office mailed the present Official Action on January 28, 2005. The applicants have requested an extension of time to reply to this Official Action, and have paid the requisite fees to extend the period to time to respond to June 28, 2005. As supported by the attached power of attorney, the applicants have authorized the party signing this response to represent them before the Office.

Status of Claims

The application, as filed included 40 claims with claims 1, 19 and 37 being the only independent claims. The remaining claims depend either directly or indirectly on one of these claims. Claims 2, 5-12, 14-17, 20, 23-30 and 32-35 have been previously withdrawn. Presently the Office rejects claims 1, 3, 13, 18, 19, 21, 31 and 36-40 and has objected to claims 4 and 22.

In this response, the applicants amend claims 4 and 22 and cancel claims 1-3, 5-21, and 23-40.

Specification

The Office has objected to the specification as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. Namely, the Office has alleged that the elements "collapsible interlocking members" claim 1 and "retaining structure" claim 19 do not include an antecedent basis. Further, the Office has objected to the specification because the reference numerals 110 and 120 have both been used to indicate a slide cap.

The applicant respectfully asserts that the term element "collapsible interlocking members" is disclosed in the specification and the figures. The collapsible interlocking members as described in the specification includes a first cylindrical component 110 and a second

cylindrical component 70 as described in paragraph 0093 and shown in Figs. 31 and 32 and further described in paragraph 96 along with component 80.

The applicant respectfully asserts that the term element "retaining structure" is synonymous to the element "releasable latch structure" recited in claim 1 and described in the specification as latch 38 (see paragraphs 82 and 83 and Figs. 2 and 3).

The applicant has submitted replacement paragraphs 0093 - 0095 to correct the informality of referring to the slide cap as element 110 rather than 120. In addition, the applicants submit substitute drawing to include element 116a as described in substitute paragraph 0095.

The applicants submit that these amendments do not add new matter but rather, simply clarify the description of the drawings.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C § 102

The Office has rejected claims 1, 3, 13, 18, 19, 21, 31, and 36-40 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Number 5,336,199 to Castillo et al. The applicant has canceled these claims. The applicant's action should not be inferred as an admission to the correctness of the Office's position but rather, is being taken in the interest of furthering prosecution and issuance of the remaining claims. The applicant reserves the right to pursue these claims in a continuation application.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Office has indicated that claims 4 and 22 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The applicant has amended claim 4 to include all of the limitations of the base claim 1, and intervening claim 3. The applicant has amended claim 22 to include all of the limitations of the base claim 19 and intervening claim 21. Thus, the applicant submits that claims 4 and 22 are now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests the Office to issue a notice of allowance in this case.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that the currently pending claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that the case be processed to issuance. Each issued raised in the Office Action has been fully addressed in this response. If the Office has any questions or if there are any actions that can be handled through an Examiner's Amendment, the applicant requests the Office to contact the attorney of record using the below-provided contact information.

Respectfully submitted,

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